

VZCZCXRO9276
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #1468 1921150
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 111150Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0200
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0439
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0440
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 7361
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS ABUJA 001468

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MINISTERIAL SCREENING BEGINS

REF: ABUJA 1446

11. SUMMARY: The Nigerian Senate postponed its screening of Ministerial nominees from July 10 to July 11 amidst controversy over some candidates. At least three of the 34 nominees submitted by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua have had formal petitions filed against them, including Ojo Maduekwe, Dr. Aliyu Umar Modibbo and Yayale Ahmed. Although it is unclear how much attention the Senate will pay to the petitions, they promised a thorough screening of all nominees. The confirmation hearings will be broadcast live on television for the first time in Nigeria's history. END SUMMARY.

12. Chief Ojo Maduekwe, the PDP National Secretary, was nominated to represent Abia state. However, all three Senators from Abia have declared their opposition to his candidacy, which should make his confirmation difficult. Critics say that confirming Maduekwe, who is from the state's northern senatorial district, will further marginalize the Ukwa/Mgwa people of the state who have yet to produce a minister. Senators Enyinniya Abaribe (PDP, Abia South) and Nkechi Nwogu (PDP, Abia Central) forwarded their petitions against Maduekwe to the President of the Senate alleging that his nomination was against the zoning agreement that the slot should be awarded to the Ukwa/Ngwa section of the state. Senator Uche Chukwumerije (PPA, Abia North) did not sign the petition but confirmed Sunday that he supported it. However, Deputy Majority Leader Senator Ndoma-Egba reminded the press July 10 that although the opinions of Senators from the nominee's state are important and convention holds that at least 2 of the 3 should approve nominees, "at the end of the day when it comes to Ministerial screening, it is the entire Senate that decides which way it goes."

13. Dr. Aliyu Umar Modibbo, from Gombe State, is the former Minister of Commerce for past President Olusegun Obasanjo. The Gombe House of Assembly passed a resolution rejecting the former Minister, reportedly due to the incumbent Governor's fear of Modibbo gaining too much power locally. The Governor may fear that if Modibbo gains enough power he may challenge him in future years.

14. Yayale Ahmed from Bauchi State is the current Head of the Civil Service of Nigeria. A technocrat with no political experience, it is widely believed that Ahmed received the nomination due to his neutrality. The former Governor of Bauchi saw his PDP party lose to the ANPP and decided to

nominate someone that all people would support yet allow him to still govern from behind. Other politicians are said to be balking at his nomination due to lack of experience and credibility.

¶15. Deputy Senate Leader Victor Ndoma-Egba said each nominee and petition would go through a thorough screening one by one. He also revealed that thus far only 17 of the 34 candidates have presented necessary documents to the Senate to begin screening. Ndoma-Egba said that the screening would be transparent because the hearings will be broadcast live on local television. Senate leadership stated that the screening exercise, scheduled to begin July 11, will ensure only competent people are selected into the cabinet even if the process takes weeks. However, the Senate also promised that the screening would conclude within the shortest possible time to avoid a constitutional provision that allows the President to swear in ministers twenty-one days after sending their nominations to the Senate.

¶16. COMMENT: Despite their promises of thorough screening and transparency, it is unclear how seriously the Senate will take the petitions against ministerial nominees. However, the live broadcast of the screenings will demonstrate the seriousness of the process. If the Senators do not ask tough, relevant questions in regards to the petitions then it will be clear that the exercise is just for show. END
COMMENT.
CAMPBELL